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California State Senate

SENATOR
DARRELL STEINBERG
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE
SIXTH SENATE DISTRICT

STANDING COMMITTEES:
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February 13, 2012

Director Toby Douglas
Department of Health Care Services
1501 Capitol Avenue
Suite 6001
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Dental Managed Care for Medi-Cal in Sacramento

Dear Director Douglas:

It is with great concern that I write regarding the operation and apparent lack of oversight of Medi-Cal Dental Managed Care in Sacramento. I ask that you review the allegations and rectify the problems you identify.

The February 12, 2012 article in the Sacramento Bee articulates the crucial patient need for timely and medically necessary dental care which is supposed to be provided to patients enrolled in the Medi-Cal Program. Despite that state funding, disturbing specific patient cases as well as the department's own data cited in the article make it abundantly clear that prevention and treatment services are woefully inadequate for those children most in need.

A recently published report funded by First 5 Sacramento also documents severe issues with Medi-Cal Dental Managed Care in Sacramento.

As the state's Medi-Cal agent, it is imperative for the department to take immediate action to rectify this crisis in prevention and treatment services. Based on your review, I believe there are several urgent actions which should be considered by the Administration, including the following:

- Fully monitor these state contracts and require dental contractors to meet quality performance indicators on an ongoing basis;
- Provide transparency of quality performance indicators and data obtained from dental contractors;
- Withhold payment from dental plans not meeting patient access standards or other quality performance indicators;
- Terminate contracts with poor performing dental plans;
- Address the need for increased patient education and outreach strategies to support access to dental services and the rights of Medi-Cal patients to services; and
- Improve access to services by at least temporarily providing for patient enrollment in Medi-Cal Fee-for-Service dental services until flaws in the existing managed care system are rectified.

I am seeking timely resolution to improving these vital dental services to enable patients to obtain the prevention and treatment services they deserve. Furthermore, the significant issues identified here raise the overarching concern of whether or not the state is prepared and equipped to proceed with any Medi-Cal managed care program expansions this year as proposed in the Governor's January budget.

Please advise me as to what immediate and longer-term actions the department will be taking to vastly improve this program for our patients in need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Darrell Steinberg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

DARRELL STEINBERG
President pro Tempore